

Flathead County Fair Commission
May 14, 2009

The Flathead County Fair Commission met in session May 14, 2009. Members present were Chairman Butch Woolard, Vice Chairman Terry Fosbery, Commission members Susan Munsinger, Paul Atkinson, and Ted Dykstra. Manager Jay Scott.

Guests were Office Assistant Nuggett Carmalt, County Commissioner Joe Brenneman, Katie Chamberlin, Shelby Nash and Chance Barnet both with Flathead Home Builders, Genna Tartaglino with the Flathead Valley Hockey Association, Mike Martin from Alpine Fire Works, and Ron Theibert, horse racing representative.

Chairman Woolard called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Minutes from the April meeting were discussed.

Munsinger moved to approve the minutes as read Atkinson seconded the motion.

Public Comment:

Carmalt asked the commission if any of them had a problem with her and her work. Dykstra said they over see the manager and not the Fair Grounds staff, any problems should go to the manager. Fosbery agreed that the Fair Commission has no say over the staff. Carmalt then asked if her job was at risk at this time, Woolard said no but, employee issues was the managers job, she then asked Scott if he thought her job was at risk, he said not that he knew of.

Katie Chamberlin asked the Commission about a protection clause in their contract. They did not have one this year and they feel the attendance was down 15% and the dollars were down 20% compared to last year. The booth rent was down also and trade and special deals had to be made to fill the building. Katie said the Flathead Home Builders feels two shows close together is too much for a community the size of Flathead County. They feel the LHC show really hurt them in attendance and in revenue. The Flathead Home Builders would like to see a 90 day, before and after, clause put in their contract so there can not be any competition in the same type of show at the fair grounds.

Fosbery asked if Katie thought the economy had any effect on the Flathead Home Builders show this year and not the LHC show.

Barnet feels the LHC show was the most damaging and not the economy.

Woolard said we are in business also and we need to look at revenue, if we gave everyone this type of clause we would only have about four shows a year.

Katie then asked if there could be a 45 day before and after clause put in the contract. In 2010 they would like to see no other shows at the Fair Grounds that have the same displays or booths as their show, starting February 1, 2010 to May 1, 2010.

Dykstra said he couldn't vote on a four month a competition clause like this, it would be too much of a loss in revenue to the Fair Grounds.

Katie said she thinks having two shows in the spring is also confusing to the public.

Munsinger said, we are a county facility and feels it is not fair to the public if we turn away money/rent from others that want to use the facilities. We have to be accountable to the County Commissioners and the county tax payers for making as much revenue as we can. Munsinger

said she thinks competition is healthy, whether it is a home show, carnival or a gun show. We can not control what the competition charges but at the same time she thinks if there is a non compete clause put in a contract then it will have to be put in all contracts at some point. Dykstra moved to table the discussion on the no competition clause at this time although the Home Builders have been here twice; he feels the commission needs to get advice from the Counties legal department before he could make a comfortable vote. Atkinson seconded the motion.

Theibert addressed the commission on training stall rents for horse racing. Stall rent for 2008 was \$8035.00, which was paid to the Fair Grounds. This year the rent was raised to \$1400.00 per month and the horse trainers feels this is too high. It works out to be an increase in rent from \$50.00 per stall to \$70.00 per stall which is to big of an increase. Theibert would like to see the rent stay the same as last years rent; the trainers that train here are local tax payers also.

Atkinson said last year we were paying \$4.00 per gallon for fuel; this year fuel is half of that so he would like to see the rent stay the same as last year also.

Theibert said the horseman may be able to pay a little more rent but then would expect more time working the track, have stall repairs made, but if everything stayed the same as in the past then the rent should stay the same.

Woolard asked Thiebert if the trainers would be happy if the rent was to stay the same this year as it was last year and discuss the rents after the training season this year.

Thiebert said that would work well for all of the trainers and he thinks it would be fair to the Fair Grounds also.

Atkinson moved to leave the rent the same as last year and to have discussions on the stall rent after the training season this year. Dysktra seconded the motion all agreed.

Genna Tartaglino with the Hockey Association talked with the Commission about the hockey rink at Woodland Park and how this group would like to have a booth at the fair this year as a fund raiser. They first started in 2007 and are building larger group each year. They feel they have workers, a menu, and a great need to have a booth at the fair. An information sheet was presented to each of the commission about the Hockey Association. They have several upgrades in mind to make to the booth they are asking to use.

Fosbery gave a little history about how the fair has worked in the past as to the food booths being not for profit. The commission paid to the fair grounds on the food and drink sold at fair time. Any new food booths are being told that the Commission doesn't want duplicate we are looking for something new that no other booth is offering. Fosbery suggested they contact other fairs or groups to find new items to sell, they suggested several things like meat balls on a stick.

After some discussion Fosbery moved to allow the Hockey Association to move into the Home Makers booth which is owned by the Fair Grounds their commission to the Fair Grounds would be 30% of the gross sales. Dykstra seconded all approved.

Mike Martin with Alpine Fireworks asked if there was any interest in fireworks at this year rodeo.

Woolard asked if he would be willing to help raise some money or sponsorships to pay for the fireworks. Dykstra said the cost is getting to high and we never heard from him in five months so we didn't put in any money for fireworks into this years budget.

Martin said he could do a one night show instead of a three night show which has been done here for the last 30 years approximately; the cost would be \$5000.00, which is half of last year. Martin thinks if he did the fireworks at the Fair another year it would be that much easier to get a sponsor to pay for the fireworks. He did feel he dropped the ball by not getting back to the Fair Commission earlier and understands that we can not afford fireworks this year but has hopes of getting them back next year.

Commission Report:

Dykstra is looking into a cost proposal to do a better web site for the Fair Grounds maybe hire a professional to get this project up and working in a timely manner.

Dykstra said he found that all County Department Heads are on a three year contract and he would like to get Commissioner Brenneman's thought on giving Scott a five year labor contract. Also Dykstra asked for clarification on the new Office Manager position the county hired for the Fair Grounds, with these questions Dykstra asked Commissioner Brenneman for his input.

Brenneman thanked the Fair Commission on all of their hard work and efforts on putting on a quality fair. On the issue of a longer contract term Brenneman said he didn't think the county would look at a long term contract for any department head but he could only speak for himself.

On the new hire in the office, he said the commissioner's office called Woolard down to their office and talked about some of the things going on in the fair office. The commissioners are having a problem with the way the fair office is operating; the idea of an office manager is to train the office staff in setting up better office procedures. Brenneman said the fair is one of the largest money handling events in the county and there needs to be some better accounting and better skills like in the quick books program.

Brenneman said there will be several changes or adjustments in the policy and procedures, but at no time has the County Commissioners felt there is a need to make a management change just an office management change. The entire county has changed over the last ten years, but the fair office management has not. Brenneman said the office management change is directed by the County Commissioners office.

Atkinson said Scott is doing a good job and wants Scott to stay as he currently is.

Brenneman there needs to be some change and there will be some or the commissioner office will make the changes needed.

Fosbery asked about what Brenneman thought the strength or the weakness of the fair is.

Brenneman thinks the same segment of people that came to the fair 40 years ago still come to the fair every year. He doesn't think that the people with real money come to the fair. Everyone likes to see the animals and the exhibits, rodeo people like rodeos, but how do you get more new people to come is the unknown.

Dykstra said Louie with the on-line ticketing will be here for a meeting on the 12th of May, the rest of the commission is welcome to attend the meeting or meet with him at the Fair Grounds.

Munsinger had nothing to report.

Atkinson had nothing to report at this time.

Fosbery said he is getting calls on chute signs they are \$900.00 each this year. Dykstra asked if we could put two signs on each chute, Fosbery thinks that would cause confusion and at this time we are not having trouble finding sponsors, he would rather have one sign per chute.

Fosbery said would like to see Pink Night be discussed at the next meeting, he thinks we may want to move it to Friday night; he will have more information for us at the next meeting.

Fosbery said the Rodeo Committee is Lonnie Hankinson, Lynn Tripp, Jamie Tripp, Ken Jones, and Lois

Woolard had nothing to report.

Old Business:

Discussion was held on the Dodge agreement, with the Fair Grounds driving a KARI Dodge pickup. It was decided that if there are any changes to be made Jim Peterson needs to come to a meeting and discuss the changes with the Fair Commission.

Woolard said he would talk with Kalispell Toyota to see if there is any interest there in providing a pickup to the Fair Grounds.

The protection clause for the Flathead Home Builders was discussed. Woolard suggested that protection should be bought by the week. It would only be a protection from the same type of events not a building rental, the Fair Grounds still needs to be rented to make budget.

Dyksrta asked if Scott could visit with the counties legal department and if there is no problem then he thinks the cost should be around \$1000.00 per week. The Trade Center building rents for \$1800.00 per day so \$1000.00 per week should not be a problem.

Munsinger agreed and restated that competition is healthy and all businesses would like to not have any, but if want to limit competition then there has to be a price.

Fosbery second Dykstra motion, motion passed.

New Business:

Munsinger said she has received some calls on the new Office Manager position.

Managers Report:

Scott reported that the Spring Rodeo was going to have India Relay races it will be held this year on May 29, 30. Vance Brash from Columbia Falls has the rodeo company.

Scott asked the commission what to do about a beer garden at the rodeo; we are allowing alcohol at event held in the buildings. The only difference here is this event is held outside. This event is a ticketed event and there will be security in the beer gardens and outside of the beer gardens. The contractor has all of the required insurance to hold the rodeo and copies of the insurance has been sent to the County Attorneys office and the HR departments.

Scott told the Fair Commission building rent is going strong still, he has concerns because of the economy, he asked the Commission if they felt the rent should be looked at for this reason they felt the rent should actually be raised to include set and tear down days, which are not charge for today. The rental price was readjusted to start May 1,2009 all building rent will include set and tear down day added to the daily rental charge.

Scott reported that getting set up for the fair is going slow this year, will be ready but it is going to be a lot tougher then in the past. The main reason is the lack of help, time, and trying to save budget this year and not have any extra help on the grounds.

The next Fair Commission meeting will be held June 9, 2009 at 6:00P.M.

Atkinson move to adjourn the meeting at 8:45

Dykstra second

Chairman

Secretary/Manager